

ARCHIVE COPY

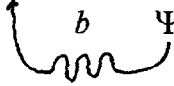
97-E-57
C.1

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

Thinking About(Thinking(About))

s i
IN ta il t
b Ψ



THINKING ABOUT INSTABILITY

CORE COURSE 5605 ESSAY

EDWARD BOWEN/ CLASS OF 1997
MILITARY STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS
SEMINAR A
DR LANI KASS
CAPT DOYLE

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 1997		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-1997 to 00-00-1997	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Thinking About Instability				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) National War College, 300 5th Avenue, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC, 20319-6000				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT see report					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 18	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Introduction

Maintaining stability in the face of a rapidly changing world order is a major United States' objective for both the President's National Security Strategy (NSS) and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's National Military Strategy (NMS). On the surface, these documents appear to be consistent and the Chairman's strategy of "flexible and selective engagement" appears to fully support the President's strategy of "engagement and enlargement." However, the converse may not be true. A critical examination of the implications of actually implementing the President's strategy indicates that its pursuit of stability through engagement could actually decrease the flexibility and selectivity of our military response, thus severely limiting our ability to respond when our vital interests are threatened.

The National Security Strategy

The National Security Strategy has a definite political flavor. The Administration's strategy for meeting the nation's basic security needs is explained and justified and the Administration's successes are illuminated-- without reference to failures. Military force is properly placed in the constitutional context of "providing for the common defense and promoting the general welfare." An underlying theme is that the United States, as the only remaining superpower in a dangerous, rapidly changing and uncertain world, has the ability and the responsibility to assume world leadership to promote peace and stability on global, regional and transnational levels, as well as within sovereign states under extreme circumstances. The primary elements of the National Security Strategy are selective

engagement focused on challenges most important to our national interests; and enlargement of the community of democratic nations

Stability under this strategy seems to be based upon structural balance of power, in which the United States continues to dominate among the other major powers. Stability among the lesser powers would depend on regional integration and prevention of emergence of an aggressive regional power. Stability within nations would be ensured by democratic processes and the rule of law, guaranteed by the possibility of intervention by the United States, either unilaterally or in conjunction with allies

The National Military Strategy

The National Military Strategy supports the National Security Strategy of engagement and enlargement with a strategy of flexible and selective engagement intended to "help shape the evolving international environment." Two national military objectives are promoting stability and thwarting aggression. Regional instability tops the list of dangers the military must address. These include internal conflicts -- such as in Somalia and Rwanda and Yugoslavia -- and attacks against neighboring states such as happened in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The military strategy for addressing these dangers lies in three sets of tasks. (1) peacetime engagement to demonstrate commitment, improve collective military capabilities, promote democratic ideals, and, in many other ways, enhance regional security; (2) deterrence and conflict prevention, which includes measures such as nuclear deterrence, strengthening regional alliances, military response to crises, arms control, sanctions enforcement and peace enforcement; and (3) fight and win the nation's wars using decisive force to achieve clear objectives

The Way We Think

For a particular situation, the decision on whether or not to deploy military forces to stabilize a situation short of war lies with the President within the scope of his authority under the War Powers Act. Such situations almost always are impacted by other political actors -- members of the Congress. The diversity of world views, assumptions and cognitive styles brought to bear by this diverse group probably defies even a broad subjective characterization. A review of congressional records from hearings on Somalia, for example, shows how a mix of politicians, intellectuals, lawyers and "good old boys from down home" can appear to make important operational decisions based on historical analogy and comparisons of nation states to entities as diverse as a snake, a machine or a human being.

The fact that congressional decisions may be heavily influenced by analogies and metaphors, which might bear little resemblance to reality, may or may not pose a problem. In the Congress individual ideas are subject to a selection and modification process, so that the ones that survive may be quite appropriate or, at least, represent a modicum of consensus. Furthermore, the use of metaphors can actually expedite the creative process. Unfortunately, they are often used in specious arguments to persuade those unable or unwilling to look beyond the metaphor.

The cognitive styles of the military and civilian bureaucrats are arguably more formal and structured and much less diverse than the politicians'. Historical analogy (often the same cases) is frequently used by both military and civilian officials. But history is a poor predictor of the future. Many military, and fewer civilians, express great

faith in doctrine, “principles of war”, and such concepts as the “center of gravity”

Almost any situation can be forced into these models and they provide a common frame of reference for military planners. Still, these are, in essence, metaphors. They are not universal truths. They do not have the predictive value of the laws of thermodynamics or Newton’s laws. Knowing this, some military and civilian strategists augment historical analogy with analogies from the physical and biological sciences. Some are now turning to the “new sciences” of chaos, complexity, quantum physics, fuzzy logic, evolutionary systems, and the like which give a better intuitive match to reality by adding the elements of uncertainty and instability.

This paper maintains that the reason for the disconnect between the NSS and NMS could be related to basic assumptions, world view and cognitive models of national level decision makers responsible for developing and implementing these strategies. This does not mean they are necessarily wrong, but that they simply give the wrong answer when applied to the concept of stability. This paper avoids resort to historical analogy and classical military theory in examining the concept of stability. The primary reason is that better minds have already applied this kind of reasoning in developing the strategy. A similar effort here would certainly provide a similar but worse result.

The Nature of Stability

A first step in thinking about stability could be to define what it is and determine how to recognize it when we see it. A dictionary definition of stability which seems adequate for a general discussion is:

“The state or quality of being stable, especially” a. Resistance to change, deterioration, or displacement. b. Constancy of character or purpose, steadfastness c. Reliability, dependability.

A two dimensional Cartesian space can be used as a conceptual basis for visualizing stability. The following descriptions will provide arbitrary labels as a guide to further discussion. Assume that the horizontal axis represents time and the vertical axis represents the observed state of some arbitrary system.

A single point would represent absolute stability for an infinitesimally small time period-but such a system would also have an infinitesimally short life span: label it “non viable.” The system could be seen as not capable of existence at that particular time. A vertical line would represent infinite change and also have an infinitesimally short life span. This system, call it the “excessive mutant” would disappear into infinity (or die) due to excessive change. A horizontal line would represent a system unchanging over time, perfectly meeting the above definition call it the “ conservative adapter.” A straight, sloped line would be changing and so would not strictly meet the criteria of definition “a”, but, it could meet the requirements of definitions “b” and “c”, call it the “modest achiever.” The system would be changing in a predictable manner at a rate determined by the slope of the line. A curved, increasing or decreasing line (exponential or negative exponential, for example) could asymptotically approach the horizontal or vertical or could be very close to linear, depending on functional form and location along the time axis: call it the “ under/over achiever ” A periodic curve, such as a sine wave could meet the definition of stability but to a matter of degree, call it the “oscillator.” A random

pattern is called “chaos.” A well ordered pattern (straight, smooth curve, sine curve) which suddenly becomes discontinuous and loses its former characteristics is called “catastrophe ” (See figure 1).

Recognizing the above patterns in real entities is frequently difficult, if not impossible. Additionally, the points can be expanded to interrelated, multi-dimensional vectors of variables, which individually or as sets can demonstrate characteristics of instability and stability. Observations over time are generally used to determine a pattern. It is important to note, however, that any two observations will always yield a straight line, which could be totally misleading. Additionally, repeated observations at discrete time intervals can omit important information contained in omitted intervals and give a false view of the form of stability. Probably the most misleading way to observe a system is by taking a snapshot and describing the system solely in terms of structure at that point in time. Structure and process cannot be separated under this model.

Describing the System

Points and lines are adequate for a general discussion of stability. However, a more detailed discussion of the “arbitrary system”, which is the subject of this inquiry, is required in order to proceed. A broad definition of a system is given by Boulding (1985) as anything that is not chaos or any structure that exhibits order and pattern. Snyder (1993) provides a narrower definition of a system as “ an arrangement of certain components so interrelated as to form a whole,” or as “ sets of elements standing in interaction ”

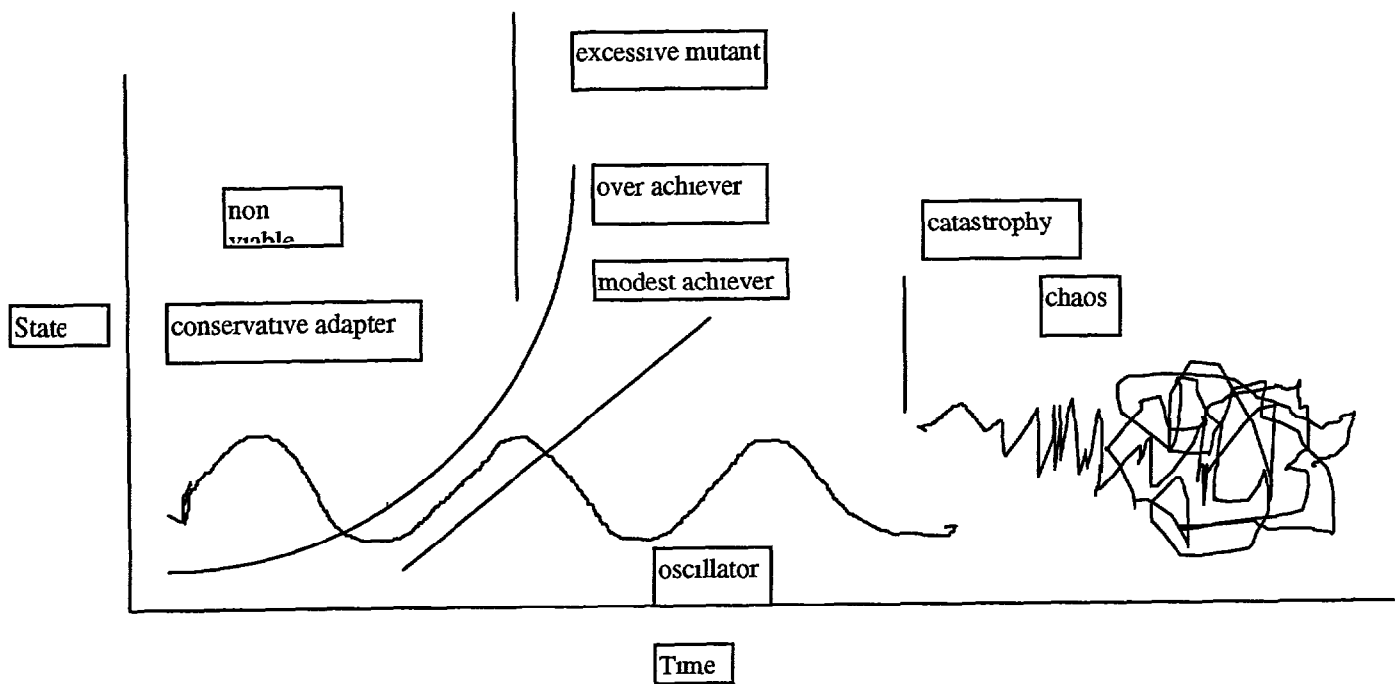


Fig 1 Conceptual map for stability

This figure provides a visual representation of systems exhibiting various degrees of stability

This paper will not discuss the dimensions across which systems may vary or delve into general systems theory any further than necessary. However, one central concept is essential: the concept of an open versus closed system. A closed system is, for all practical purposes, completely self contained. The components are connected and interactive. But, not every component is necessarily dependent or linked directly to every other one. Furthermore, the dependency structure is not necessarily reciprocal. An open system receives inputs from and provides outputs to the environment. Many systems are neither totally open or totally closed. Additionally, determining the boundaries of an open system can be very difficult. The world could, for example, be considered as a closed system (neglecting interaction with celestial bodies). Individual nations may consider themselves to be open systems in some dimensions (possibly economics) and closed for others, such as national security.

Fundamental Assumptions

The national security strategy assumes that United States cannot risk being disengaged from the world without adversely affecting global stability. A primary, and widely accepted reason is based on historical precedent. When the U.S. became unengaged catastrophic instability soon followed - twice this century. The logical argument really boils down to "not engaged implies not stable" therefore "engagement implies stability." This is an invalid argument based on the logical fallacy of denying the antecedent ("A implies B" does not mean that "not A implies not B")

The fact that the argument is logically invalid, however, does not prove the hypothesis “not involved implies not stable” to be either true or false for the historical cases. But, giving the benefit of the doubt, and assuming the hypothesis to be true, it would still be logically invalid to conclude that the hypothesis is universally true and, thus, applicable to the present. This would require an inductive leap that amounts to little more than hypothetical “what ifing” and speculation on the road not taken. Referring to the simple system model discussed above, this would amount to the world system moving through time and returning to the same -- or very similar -- state as in the past and expecting an action taken in the present to yield an anticipated result in the future that approximates a state imagined but not actually observed in the past, based on actions not actually taken at that time. If the craziness of this logic is not self defeating, then I refute it thus: the arrows of time point toward the future (according to the laws of thermodynamics) not toward 1914 or 1939.

The Strategy of Engagement

The national security strategy of engagement leads directly to the first component of the national military strategy: peacetime engagement. The first objective is to promote stability. The National Military Strategy states “There is ample historical precedent in this century that regional instability in military, economic and political terms can escalate into global conflict.” The historical argument in the preceding paragraph was along the lines of “when we are not there bad things happen, so we should be there.” The similar message here is “regional instability over there can draw us into global conflict so here’s what we are doing and what we intend to do to promote stability.” Since we intend to use the

daily peacetime activities of overseas stationed and routinely deployed forces, this may seem like a win/win policy. But there is some circular reasoning here. A major, but not the only, reason these forces are there in the first place is to promote and maintain stability. So the daily activities of forces there to promote stability will be used to promote stability. To imply that all or most of the forces would be there anyway seems a little misleading. This is a minor point, however.

The major issue in the peacetime engagement/forward presence objective is the assumption that the increased levels of cooperative and defensive security arrangements will actually increase regional and world stability and will, therefore, benefit the United States. This belief relies heavily on the balance of power and collective security arguments. The desired end state seems to be sets of democratic regional powers with highly trained (possibly by the U.S.), well equipped, and interoperable armed forces, linked by a set of regional and international (i.e., U.N.) defensive arrangements, and having growing, robust and highly interdependent market economies. In this case would the nations be internally stable? Would the regions be stable? Would stability exist within the regions?

First, how might regional military integration promote internal stability? A group of nations agreeing to a set of circumstances which would lead to intervention by neighbors is not easy to imagine. So, what does regional integration and interoperability bode for security? Nothing of significance, unless the individual nations conduct military operations against a common enemy. In this case interoperability could improve the ability of a coalition to respond quickly and effectively and, as a result, could serve as an

incentive for collective aggression, as well as collective security. Whether the international collective security arrangements would serve to deter or thwart such an aggressive coalition would depend on the particular circumstances. What is certain, though, is that such a coalition would weaken the international collective security structure. Another consideration is the relative strength of international and regional alliances and the potential for conflict in interests. It is not inconceivable that closely integrated regions, with a preponderance of common interests, could form regional military blocs in military and economic competition with other regions, or with major powers such as the United States.

One might then question whether or not collective security arrangements are actually beneficial to the United States at all. The objective of collective security is to provide an arrangement in the present to cope with conflict in the future. A positive deterrent effect is not a provable proposition. If conflict arises, the deterrent has failed and the value of the arrangement will be determined by the outcome of the fight. Collective security, like insurance, benefits the injured but not the healthy. Also, those most likely to need it are often those least likely to be able to pay. A strong power like the U.S. can act unilaterally, if it deems it necessary, to protect its interests. However, if a strong collective security environment exists, the U.S. in acting unilaterally could risk being labeled as an aggressor and be subject to punitive action. Furthermore, it is unrealistic to assume that the U.S. can always, or even usually, obtain consensus on who is right or wrong in a dispute.

The next stage of military involvement in peacetime engagement involves deterrence. Force presence itself is assumed to be a deterrent, independent of regional alliances. Again, historical examples can be given of U.S. warships appearing and conflict not occurring. Common sense does seem to indicate that a demonstration of commitment and resolve would build a nation's reputation, and when combined with a credible capability, result in effective deterrence in the future. Yet, this again assumes a cause and effect relationship which cannot be either proved or disproved. One problem in this reasoning is that it assumes others' perceptions. We cannot give ourselves a relational quality -- such as reputation for resolve -- any more than we can give ourselves the trust of others. Another possible result of commitment is to increase the resolve of the adversary to increase capability to resist in the next instance. Without resort to history, one has only to look at the present world scene to see instability and increasing resistance to U.S. policies virtually under the shadow of overwhelming U.S. presence.

If deterrence does fail, the next step called for in the national military strategy is to "fight and win." But, there are a number of operations -- such as peace enforcement and sanctions enforcement -- that can involve combat and do not fall into the "fight and win" category. Using the military to temporarily stabilize a situation, while other instruments of power are used to achieve structural changes in infrastructure, government, communications and the like, has met with some success in the past.

Past successes notwithstanding, military doctrine presents stability in a fairly narrow light. Military operations "shape" battlefields; the national military strategy refers to helping "shape" the international environment. The military is very strong on

maintaining structural integrity of forces and maintaining internal stability in the face of an unstable, uncertain and chaotic environment. Destabilizing and dislocating an enemy is actually a contributor to success in combat. Destroying enemy structure, while maintaining one's own, is also a measure of success. Actually, a military unit's ability to "shape" anything other than itself is extremely limited and it can do little to provide structural stability in another nation. What the military is very good at however, is "control". Achieving local dynamic stability, at least temporarily, through threatened or actual use of force is possible under some conditions but is by no means guaranteed. Additionally, short term results may fail to deliver the long term stability which is the goal of our national strategy. At worst, military force may actually have long term destabilizing effects and be a self defeating effort.

Conclusion

A general systems approach to collective security would indicate that tightly coupled and highly interdependent systems are not necessarily stable. The dependency structure can generate instabilities within the system that defy explanation by cause and effect. Additionally, well ordered systems can grow to a state of structural criticality and then collapse into catastrophe, or they can reach a bifurcation point and quickly diverge into chaos. Attempts to intervene may yield inconsistent and incomprehensible effects and may actually worsen the situation. These results indicate a limited ability to influence a system headed toward instability but do not indicate helplessness. One obvious action is to decrease dependence on the other subsystems. In other words, don't get into alliances with potentially unstable nations in order to increase

their stability. Another action is to increase the stability of our own subsystem (nation) so that we will not be perturbed and become unstable ourselves. A strong, stable, independent, and flexible system (nation) has greater ability to survive catastrophe or chaos. However, independence has its costs in the form of reduced power since we would not be able to leverage capabilities of others.

Regional stability, it seems, may actually be an unachievable, illusory and self-defeating goal. We may find some forms of instability to be offensive. But, instability does not necessarily mean insecurity and not all instability can be proven to be inimical to our long term national interests. What is definitely in our national interest, however, is to ensure our nation's survival in the event a major conflict with a key power or a regional alliance. In this case, we will not be able to be "selective." Since we cannot reliably predict the time or exact nature of such a conflict, we do, indeed, need to be "flexible." But, a relative small, over-specialized force (even leveraged by technology) which is encumbered by a complex web of alliances, may be in danger of being drawn into a conflict for which it is ill prepared and in which it cannot prevail.

The Rest of the Story

The main point of this paper actually lies in the title on the cover, not in the issue of disconnect between the National Security Strategy and the National Military Strategy. The disconnect may not actually exist and the argument presented here may be totally wrong, partially wrong, partially right, totally right, or something else. In any case, the ideas in this paper do not represent any unique or original insights or ways of thinking.

The point is the way we think about instability influences the way we see it, and whether we see it at all. "Closed loop" thinking, relying on traditional methods, models and doctrine, tends to reinforce existing perceptions in a recursive manner. Such thinking may be reasonably effective for explaining historical events, our perception of which is shaped by the same type of thinking. It may also be effective for understanding a fairly stable environment. However, our real challenge as strategists lies not in maintaining stability but in understanding and being able to survive instability -- in particular, a catastrophic and surprising disconnect with the past.

As with all other systems, the survival of our nation and our society will ultimately be decided by our ability to adapt. As with all other organic systems, survival of the species results in some individuals having to die prematurely. These include some who are unable to accommodate to change and mutants who are also unfit for the new environment. It is the mutants who save the species. Since evolution is blind and no species (not even humans) can see the real disconnects in the future, a great many mutants are required to grope in the dark for solutions to problems not yet identified or recognized.

Survival of our nation may hinge on mental mutations. I believe an effective mutant strategist will need to be able to recognize the stability inherent in instability and the instability inherent in stability. Mutant organisms do not survive to be tested in the distant future. Timing is critical for them. Fortunately, humans can cultivate and save mutant ideas which may hold the key to our future. This final section is intended to

motivate you to not throw this paper in the trash before you glance at and think about the title, and generate a mutant idea of your own

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Boulding, Kenneth E The World as a Total System London. Sage Publications, 1985

Brown, Courtney Serpents in the Sand Essays on the Nonlinear Nature of Politics and Human Destiny University of Michigan Press, 1995

Ferguson, Yale H. and Mansbach, Robert W The State, Conceptual Chaos, and the Future of International Relations Theory Boulder Co: Lynne Rienner Inc , 1989

Snyder, Jack L. and Jervis, Robert, eds Coping with Complexity in the International System Boulder Co: Westview Press, 1993